

## Helpful Hints for Caregivers

The following suggestions should make communication easier for your loved one.

- Develop daily routines for the patient.
- Re-create conditions that previously existed for the patient.
- Talk about past events. (Use old photos of patient's family and friends.)
- Involve the patient actively in familiar pleasurable activities.
- Provide the patient with choices in everyday activities, such as choosing meals.
- Reduce distractions around the patient.
- Speak in short sentences.
- Repeat sentences as often as needed so the patient understands.
- Encourage the patient to use gestures when they are struggling with words.
- Maintain genuine eye contact when the patient is trying to communicate.
- Acknowledge all of the patient's feelings.
- Encourage the patient.
- Keep a positive attitude.

## Contact Information

You can learn more about cognition and speech language pathology by contacting DHEC's Home Health Services at your local health department. We will answer your questions and tell you what services are available in your county.

*\* This pamphlet is not meant to take the place of your physician or speech-language pathologist. A patient may experience several deficits in cognition. Please consult with your physician and speech-language pathologist before implementing suggested caregiver instructions.*



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*Promoting and protecting the health of the public  
and the environment.*

# Thinking to Communicate

## A Caregiver's Guide



## Speech Therapy

**DHEC Home Health Services**  
**Cognitive Functioning**

**Keeping families together since 1966.**



## Cognition is thinking to communicate

The way we think, the way we remember, and the way we deal with problems is called “cognition.” Talking about the stories we have heard, describing the people we meet, and remembering events in our lives is important. By remembering the words we hear, faces we see, and tasks we do, we can communicate with our family and friends.

Some people have problems remembering large amounts of information or learning new things. These problems can be related to the brain’s cognitive ability. Knowing the causes and treatment of cognitive problems is important for the patient and caregiver.

## How we think affects how we communicate

Thinking and language problems can affect each another. These difficulties may include:

- Paying attention
- Remembering
- Organizing thoughts
- Solving problems

## Cognitive problems can lead to speech and language problems

### Aphasia (a-fá-shia))

- Aphasia is a language disturbance caused by a lesion of the brain, usually as a result of a stroke.



- It can make a person partially or totally impaired in his or her ability to speak, write, or comprehend the meaning of spoken or written words.
- Aphasia can be so severe that little or no speech is understood or spoken. Or it can be so mild that the only problem is finding the right word for a thought or idea.

### Dysarthria (dis-ar-thre-a))

- Dysarthria is a nervous system or muscle disorder that often makes speech hard for others to understand.
- Some of the causes include stroke, Parkinson’s disease, Huntington’s disease, and Lou Gehrig’s disease.
- A person’s pronunciation of sounds and quality of the voice may change depending on the specific disorder.

### Apraxia (a-práx-e-a)

- Apraxia is a speech disorder in which a person has difficulty moving their lips, tongue, and mouth to speak.
- It is caused by a stroke, brain injury, or other nervous system problems.
- Apraxia can range from mild speech problems to not being able to talk at all.